UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr
GENERAL

CRC/C/SR 597
21 January 2000

Original ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 597th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 17 January 2000 at 10 a m

Chairperson Mrs OUEDRAOGO

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GE 00-40308 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (CRC/C/8/Add.36) (HRI/CORE/1/Add.83; CRC/C/Q/MAC/1; written replies to questions raised in the list of issues and addendum to the written replies (documents with no symbol, distributed in the meeting room in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that as a successor State to the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, his country had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993. The Convention had been among the first international treaties to be so ratified, although its main principles had been incorporated into domestic legislation for many decades, and were therefore directly applicable. The Government attached particular importance to the adoption of measures to implement the Convention more effectively within its existing capacity and in accordance with the funds available. He noted that his Government would in the very near future consider the possibility of withdrawing its reservation to article 9 of the Convention.

3. The initial report (CRC/C/8/Add.36) focused on the legal, administrative and judicial measures taken by the country in implementing the Convention; emphasis had been placed on the legal framework. The information provided was intended to show how the Convention was applied in general and to comply with the Committee's request for information on specific cases of implementation of legislation in specific instances.

4. Since the submission of the initial report improvements had been made in adapting the national legal framework to meet the requirements of the Convention. A new Ombudsman on Children's Rights had been established in 1999, the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. Since its introduction, the Office of the Ombudsman on Children's Rights had already undertaken steps to publicize its activities throughout the country and had begun work on particular cases. He noted that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was the only country in the region with such an institution.

5. During the past few years, the Government had made considerable progress in areas affecting children. For example, there had been a 55 per cent reduction in the infant mortality rate, from more than 31 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 16 per 1,000 live births in 1998. The rate of immunization against such diseases as tuberculosis, measles and polio remained high, with over 86 per cent of all children covered. Also worthy of mention were the virtual elimination of iodine deficiency disorders, the reduction of the maternal mortality rate, breastfeeding promotion activities and the promotion of psychosocial development for children in vulnerable groups. Ninety-five per cent of all school-aged children attended primary school and, although secondary education was not compulsory, the schooling rate had increased in the past five years to nearly 85 per cent. The greatest increase had been among the Albanian population, whose enrolment

rates had quadrupled. Likewise, an "interactive learning" project had been set up. Finally, alternatives to institutional care had been promoted and national campaigns had been launched against HIV/AIDS and drug addiction.

6. It should, however, be emphasized that his country was in the midst of a transition period, its economic and political prosperity had been adversely affected by the unstable security situation and serious economic conditions in the region and by the recent crisis in Kosovo. In that regard, there remained a strong need for further enforcement of the rights of children. To that end, the Government cooperated with international organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The cooperation in question was now in the third stage of a master operating plan for the period 1999-2001, founded on the Basic Cooperation Agreement signed by the Government and UNICEF in 1994. UNICEF had also provided considerable assistance in addressing the needs of refugees, in particular children and women, during and after the recent Kosovo crisis.

7. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia fully supported the efforts made at the previous session of the Commission on Human Rights to take specific measures for the protection of children's rights, in order that the twenty-first century might become one of universal protection for those rights. It also supported the activities of the working groups preparing the two optional protocols to the Convention.

8. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said that the initial report as before the Committee was fairly detailed. A large amount of data had been supplied regarding the status of children. However, although the report referred to criticism by some non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it was not very self-critical.

9. The Committee was pleased to note that the Government had begun considering the withdrawal of the reservation to article 9 of the Convention. Similarly, the establishment of an Ombudsman on Children's Rights was a welcome development. Although it had been stated that the national legislation had already been in conformity with the Convention prior to ratification, it was unclear whether any review of legislation had been conducted for the purpose of ensuring conformity. The implementation of children's rights had been entrusted to various specialized units within ministries and other subordinate bodies. The most important institution with regard to care for children was the Social Work Centre. The Centres appeared to be subordinated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which received appeals against decisions taken by them. She wondered whether the supervisory role and appeal-based duties of the Ministry were sufficient. Given the importance of the local level for children's participation in matters affecting them, the report did not give a clear indication of the role of local political and administrative bodies in the implementation of the Convention. Similarly, neither the report nor the written replies to the list of issues indicated whether there was one body responsible for coordinating policies for children across different sectors. By extension, there did not appear to be a national strategy for the evaluation, research and management of children's rights.

10. With reference to the overall allocations made for children's rights, the Convention stated that in relation to economic, social and cultural rights, States parties should undertake measures to the maximum extent of their available resources. However, no clear picture emerged of the resources available or the extent to which priority was given to children's rights. In assigning

priority for budgetary allocations, special attention should be paid to vulnerable groups such as disabled children, those living in institutions and those belonging to minority groups. That was particularly true in relation to Roma and Albanian girls. Information about budget allocations for international cooperation would also be appreciated.

11. Mr. FULCI said that the report contained useful information, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, with regard to health, education and basic national legislation. There was, however, a lack of disaggregated data in general, which impeded understanding of the actual situation with regard to children's rights in almost all areas covered by the Convention.

12. Concerning general measures of implementation, the report failed to mention international and bilateral aid received by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or the extent to which such cooperation facilitated the implementation of the Convention; for example, no concrete examples of technical cooperation programmes were provided. Relevant up-to-date information should therefore be supplied in both of those areas.

13. There was little or no indication of the relationship between the Government and NGOs. Although reference was made to the Association for the Protection of Children in Macedonia and the First Children Embassy in the World, other NGOs had stated that the Government had done little to involve the media in the dissemination of information relating to the Convention. Likewise, the majority of Macedonian children were unaware of the existence of the Convention or its principles. Further information on the matter would be welcome.

14. Mrs. SARDENBERG, said she agreed with the previous speakers that more specific information should be provided regarding the action taken by the Government to implement the Convention. There should be greater analysis of activities being conducted on the ground to implement the Convention fully.

15. The establishment of an Ombudsman on Children's Rights and the withdrawal of the reservation to article 9 of the Convention were both favourable developments, which gave a positive message regarding full implementation. However, the decision to establish the Office of Ombudsman on Children's Rights had been taken very recently, and the Ombudsman's exact position was unclear. Was the Office an independent one, and what political weight did it carry?

16. The Committee believed that the elaboration of reports was part of the implementation process. The initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had been compiled by an inter-ministerial group, although no detailed information had been provided about its preparation. Had seminars been planned and discussions conducted within civil society and through NGOs? One of the main negative aspects of the report concerned training. In many cases, it was difficult to assume that the national authorities were fully convinced of the thrust of the Convention, that children were entitled to special rights. Emphasis had been placed on legislation but children's rights were viewed as a simple emanation of human rights in general, or of parents' rights. Efforts were needed to change attitudes and traditional perceptions. Up-to-date information should therefore be provided on training for professionals working for and with children. In that regard, what was the approach of the "interactive learning" project?

Such a project could play an important role in disseminating the principles and provisions of the Convention to children and teachers in schools, which were the main vehicles for increasing awareness of the Convention.

17. Mr. DOEK welcomed the detailed written replies to the questions raised in the list of issues (CRC/C/Q/MAC/1). The new methods and techniques for caring for children with special needs, improved levels of care and highly qualified staff in orphanages clearly attested to the Government's commitment. However, information should be provided about their impact on children's situations. Like Mrs. Sardenberg, he would welcome further information on the independence of the Ombudsman on Children's Rights.

18. He would like to know the nature of the relationship between the State Committee on the Protection of the Rights of the Child and the Union for the Care and Education of Children. According to the written replies, the State Committee drafted and amended legislation. Those were parliamentary functions in other countries; did the Committee transmit proposals to Parliament or did it possess legal authority of its own?

19. With regard to the age of recruitment into the military, the information provided in the written reply to question 6 seemed contradictory. First it was stated that military service began at age 19, and later that drafting commenced at age 18 and even at 17 on the request of the future draftee. He would appreciate clarification in that regard.

20. Mr. RABAH noted that paragraph 4 of the report (CRC/C/8/Add.36) stated that the provisions of the Convention formed part of domestic legislation and were directly applicable, while paragraph 12 stated that the minimum age for admission to employment was 15 years. Was that in line with the Convention, which set the minimum age for employment at 18 years?

21. He did not consider the replies to the Committee's questions about the dissemination of the Convention to be sufficient, especially insofar as translating the Convention into minority languages was concerned. That activity should involve not only NGOs but State institutions and the media. Cooperation and coordination with NGOs should include the preparation of reports to be submitted to the Committee.

22. He asked whether the Social Work Centres existed throughout the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and whether they cooperated with other ministries besides the Ministry of Labour.

23. Mrs. MOKHUANE requested information about the interaction between children and the Government, which was required to ensure that children's rights were respected under the Convention. She asked to what extent children were involved in policy-making. Prior to the establishment of the Ombudsman on Children's Rights, had studies or surveys been carried out to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Convention?

24. Mrs. KARP asked what the practical impact of the Convention had been on the functioning of institutions. As the Social Work Centres were not child-specific, she wondered

whether the mandates of any institutions had been modified to include children's rights as set forth in the Convention. She would also like to know whether the procedures and staffing of organizations had been changed to reflect a child-rights-based approach.

25. Had the process of preparing the report produced ideas for amendments to legislation, institutions or policies? She wondered about the impact of budgetary and human resource constraints on care for children in need. How long did those children have to wait to receive assistance, and what criteria were used for determining which children were most in need? She would also like to know whether there were plans to address the general treatment of children under an umbrella forum or policy.

26. Mrs. RILANTONO asked how legislation relating to children's rights was enacted. According to the report, social protection was provided for children under 15 and full-time students up to 25. What would be the status of a child who had married before age 25 and was still a full-time student?

27. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in a personal capacity, asked whether the process of preparing the report had included press conferences and what means were used to inform the public in that regard. Did mechanisms exist for evaluating knowledge about the Convention, and were children aware of their rights? She would like to know the public's opinion on children's rights, in particular whether children were regarded as subjects of law.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

28. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there had been no intention, in the report, to dissimulate the problems his country faced in implementing the Convention. Since independence in 1991, the main responsibility for budgeting lay with the ministries, which included community-level branches. Each ministry allocated funding for children's issues, despite which there was still a shortfall for specific programmes. Over the previous 10 years, the country had experienced massive economic problems, partly due to the wars in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which had been offset to some extent by funds made available by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

29. Individual countries had also provided assistance in specific areas. UNICEF, whose joint programmes with the Government over the previous three years had amounted to $5.8 million, was a long-standing partner in children's programmes. Some of the funds received had had to be reallocated to the refugee crisis or used for education, medical assistance and insurance.

30. Domestic legislation stipulated that medical assistance should be provided for children over 15 years of age, but it had been necessary to suspend that assistance because of the refugee crisis. Information on the criteria for determining allocation of funds was contained in the documents provided to the Committee. No specific sums were earmarked for children, who had always been considered the responsibility of the family. Although social assistance was offered to families in accordance with their income levels, it was still not satisfactory.

31. Although it had initially been thought that ministries' budgets would remain unchanged despite the announced budget cuts, the Kosovo crisis had caused the budget to be rescheduled. The pledges made by international donors held promise in that regard.

32. Discussions had been held with UNICEF over the past two years on the establishment of a coordinating body on children's rights, but other pressing issues had forced the subject into the background. The ongoing close cooperation with UNICEF had also helped to make the establishment of a coordinating body less urgent.

33. The Ministry of Justice was responsible for monitoring legislation relating to children's rights, and a working group was cooperating with UNICEF to finalize a Children's Act. He wondered whether the representative of UNICEF might take the floor to provide specific data on international assistance.

34. The CHAIRPERSON said that it was not the Committee's practice to hear specialized agencies during the discussion of a State party's report. However, the Committee would welcome information submitted by UNICEF on an informal basis.

35. Ms. LAZAROVA-TRAJKOVSKA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), replying to a question by Mrs. Tigerstedt-Tahtela on the right of appeal against decisions taken by Social Work Centres, said that the Centres issued first-level decisions and that appeals against those decisions were submitted to the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry had the power to overturn a Centre's decision. She noted that the right of appeal as a civil right was guaranteed under article 15 of the Constitution for citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as any person affected by a first-level decision issued by an administrative or public body or institution. However, the final decision did not rest with the Ministry of Labour. Dissatisfied persons could take the matter to the Supreme Court; if the Court's decision was considered unsatisfactory, the final appellate body was the Public Prosecutor's Office. It was clear from the foregoing that administrative protection was well covered by the law.

36. The Ministries of Labour, Urban Planning and Finance were structured differently from the other ministries in that their offices were decentralized, which explained their involvement in first-level appeals. With regard to the other ministries, appeals were raised in the second-level commission. For example, appeals against a rejection of an application for Macedonian nationality would be referred to the second-level commission and then to the Supreme Court.

37. In reply to a question by Mr. Fulci, she said the Ministry of Internal Affairs was working in close cooperation with NGOs; in fact, she would shortly be attending a meeting organized by one NGO on the rights of Romany children. Her ministry's work in that regard was transparent, and its files were open to examination by any NGO which justified a need to do so.

38. In response to a question by Mrs. Sardenberg about training with regard to children's rights, she said the 30 offices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs throughout the Republic disseminated information on the Convention and organized seminars on human rights, especially the rights of the child.

39. Ms. GROZDANOVA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said the Social Work Centres, established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, were public social protection institutions. They were responsible for establishing social protection projects in connection with the Law on Social Protection of Children and the Family Act, and for taking action in cases involving the criminal justice system. They were coordinated among themselves, not only by law, but because many of the cases covered were interrelated and dealt with the exercise of child and parental rights. The Inter-Municipal Social Work Centre of the City of Skopje included a separate service for marriage and family affairs, and most of its work focused on children. Local Social Work Centres sometimes advised on action to be taken with regard to a particular case.

40. Concerning the implementation of article 9 of the Convention, children's rights were regulated by the Family Act, which provided that all decisions regarding minors were taken in the child's best interests. Reality was somewhat different, as children were often separated from their parents against their will, which meant that both children and parents were deprived of their rights. In cases of separation or divorce, parents did not always fulfil their role, with spouses frequently using their children as a bargaining tool and neglecting their duty to provide for the children's physical and psychological development.

41. Children enjoyed the basic right to express their views and wishes, which was particularly important for teenagers. Employees in the Social Work Centres who dealt with children were well-educated and had had considerable experience in social policy projects organized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the cooperation of UNICEF; they tried in all cases to resolve issues in the children's best interests.

42. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that no centralized cooperation mechanism existed, but that the Social Work Centres cooperated fully with local NGOs on a case-by-case basis. As nearly one third of the country's population lived in the capital, Skopje, it was there that cooperative efforts were concentrated, although cooperation also took place in other large areas. Referring to Mr. Fulci's comment concerning financial assistance, he said that Italy, a major donor, had recently announced a contribution of $1 billion to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

43. Mr. ILIEVSKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) noted that the country's economic crisis had been exacerbated by the escalation of the Kosovo crisis and that the Ministry of Education had been particularly affected by its need to absorb thousands of refugee children into all the educational levels, at considerable cost. It had been given valuable assistance in that regard by UNICEF, which had provided basic school equipment, and, together with the Ministry of Education and the State Pedagogical Institute, had conducted child-related activities and trained teachers.

44. Replying to a question concerning discrimination against minorities in education, he said that the Laws on Primary and Secondary Education provided all children with the right to education, whatever their religious, ethnic or other affiliation. Primary education was compulsory, while secondary education, although not compulsory, was accessible to all children. Pupils who failed to attend primary school regularly were counselled by pedagogical experts and employees of the Social Work Centres. Unfortunately, while there were cases of non-attendance

by Albanian and Turkish minorities, the worst offenders were Roma. The reasons for non-attendance and dropping-out, especially by girls, were linked to traditional beliefs, particularly among the Muslim population, which considered the education of girls to be a luxury.

45. Textbooks for Albanian and Turkish minorities had been published in their mother tongue and had been distributed free of charge to primary schools by the Ministry of Education. Coverage of secondary education for minorities was on the increase, a trend the Government was doing its utmost to encourage. The "Women and Children" project advocated appropriate treatment of women and children in society.

46. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that all national minorities received education in their mother tongue; the country was proud of its record with regard to mother-tongue education and textbooks. Romany children posed the greatest problem, but special efforts were being made to provide them with textbooks and extra lessons in their language.

47. Mr. TODOROV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), replying to a question by Mrs. Sardenberg concerning the Ombudsman on Children's Rights, said that the Office of the Ombudsman had been established two years previously and consisted of four deputies headed by the national Ombudsman. Its experience since its inception had demonstrated the need for work on specific areas. Given the many child-related issues that had arisen, it had been decided, after an extensive public debate in which a number of NGOs had taken part, that one of the deputies of the Office of the Ombudsman would work exclusively on children's issues.

48. The children's ombudsman system had been explained at length in a recent publication in Macedonian. The Ombudsman's responsibility covered matters pertaining only to State organs, not those brought before the courts, in which children had recourse to the justice system. He was not in possession of statistics relating to the system, as it had been in operation for only three months. There was, however, a children's ombudsman programme for the year 2000 with four specific objectives: to impart education on children's rights, to promote the exercise of children's rights, to organize visits by social workers from the Centres, and to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Macedonian legislation in comparison with the provisions of the international human rights instruments.

49. Regarding the role of the media in informing the population about the provisions of the Convention, there were several newspapers in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia dealing with children's issues. In addition, State television broadcast weekly live discussion shows in which children could put questions to a panel of experts on various topics. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a Macedonian translation of the Convention had been distributed to primary and secondary school pupils and a bilingual edition of the text had also been published. A project on technical cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the area of education was expected to be approved by the Government for implementation from the beginning of the next school year. The main aim of the project was to ensure that human rights were incorporated into the education process by providing teaching on international human rights instruments, particularly the Convention.

50. In reply to Mr. Fulci's question, several NGOs registered at the time the report had been written, in 1995-1996, had been involved in its preparation. Issues raised in the report had also been discussed with newer NGOs in preparation for the discussion of the report with the Committee. Representatives of three NGOs had been present at the informal meeting with the members of the Committee held the previous September and had given a press conference about the discussions.

51. Regarding military service, the Ministry of Defence registered future soldiers at the age of 17, however, up to the age of 18, they were subject only to health examinations and intelligence and psychological tests. The Constitution provided that no citizen under 18 could engage in active service in the armed forces, a provision that was fully respected in practice. A proposal was currently under consideration to professionalize the entire army by 2002, so that military service would no longer be compulsory.

52. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions on general principles, civil rights and freedoms, and family environment and alternative care.

53. Mr. FULCI said that, although the report stated that the principle of non-discrimination against minorities was contained in article 9 of the Constitution, that article did not deal explicitly with discrimination on the grounds of disability and ethnicity. According to independent sources, however, the human rights of certain minorities, such as Albanians, Roma and Vlachs, were not properly respected. He would like to know why so few Albanians were admitted to university. If the reason was the low standard of teaching in Albanian-language secondary schools, that was a problem that should be addressed. He also requested more information on policies and programmes implemented or envisaged to ensure genuine non-discrimination against ethnic Macedonians and Roma.

54. The registration of children at birth was essential for implementing children's rights, and the complex machinery in place for registering births had already been described. He asked what other policies had been developed to promote the registration of children born in remote rural communities, particularly Romany children.

55. Mr. DOEK, noting that the report contained information about the protection provided by the Criminal Code in cases of child abuse and neglect within the family, requested more information about the role of the Social Work Centres in that regard. He would like to know whether there was a reporting system for bringing such cases to the attention of the Social Work Centres. The Centre had the capacity to intervene in individual cases; he inquired whether any safeguards, other than the right to appeal against decisions made by the Centre, were in place to ensure that the rights of parents and children to family life and privacy were respected when such interventions took place. Was there any outside monitoring of the activities of the Centre? He would also like to know how cases of child abuse were prosecuted when one of the parents was the perpetrator of the crime. He asked whether child victims of abuse were called to testify in court or whether there were other means of obtaining statements from them. If police interviews were used for that purpose, he would like to know whether the police officers involved received special training. He asked whether campaigns were conducted to raise awareness not only of sexual abuse but also of physical and emotional abuse.

56. Paragraphs 120-124 of the report made little mention of foster care. He would like to know whether there was a comprehensive policy to promote foster care in cases where it was necessary.

57. Mrs. KARP endorsed Mr. Doek's question about a reporting system for cases of child abuse. She reiterated her previous question about the practical impact of the Convention on the activities of organizations working with children. She would also like to know how many children represented a typical caseload for a social worker. Information would be appreciated about the regular activities of the Children's Parliament: was it an effective forum for dialogue between children and the authorities and did it lead to real changes that benefited children?

58. Mrs. SARDENBERG said she was concerned at the fact that no ombudsman specifically for children existed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; children's issues were dealt with only by a deputy in the Office of the Ombudsman. Moreover, no information was given on whether the Ombudsman was an independent figure capable of changing people's attitudes with regard to children and promoting the idea of children as subjects of law. She suggested that a comprehensive national strategy for children should be developed in order to integrate all the different activities undertaken. There appeared to be problems in enforcing legislation: greater efforts were needed to transform good intentions into real change for the benefit of children. The Convention should be used as a tool for opening debate on the subject, making it possible for issues such as discrimination against minorities to be properly acknowledged and more directly addressed.

59. Regarding the issue of birth registration, particularly of Romany children, little information had been given about the failure to register children born at home. Although the fact that 95 per cent of births were now assisted by qualified people had probably led to an increase in the birth registration rate, a significant proportion of the Romany population did not have citizenship rights. Ensuring that people had citizenship was, however, fundamental to implementing the principle of children as subjects of law. She would also like to know how the principle of children's participation was put into effect in society at large.

60. Mr. RABAH asked whether special meeting centres existed for parents who were separated from their children. Information about the procedures governing foster care and the measures in place for monitoring it would be appreciated. He would also like to know whether practical mechanisms existed to enable children to express their views to society and participate in public life, particularly at the local level.

61. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ, referring to a question by Mr. Fulci, asked whether it would be possible to update the Constitution in order to remove discrepancies between it and the various human rights instruments. Further to a question by Mrs. Sardenberg, she asked how many Romany children lacked citizenship rights as a result of not being registered at birth. Regarding the participation of children in the decision-making process, she would appreciate information about how decisions were made at the local level. She would also like to know whether Parliament delegated responsibilities to elected bodies in municipalities, in order that they might consult children about local issues affecting them.

62. Mr. DOEK requested information about international adoption in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He noted that if a child's parents were separated, the Social Work Centre was able to restrict contact between the child and the parent with whom the child did not live, whereas in most countries, such decisions were made by the courts. He would like to know what criteria were used by the Social Work Centre in deciding to limit contact between a parent and a child and whether parents were able to challenge the decision.

63. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that the Social Work Centre appeared to have a very broad mandate and asked whether any independent evaluation of its work had been carried out. She would also appreciate further information about the situation of children belonging to the Vlach minority group.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.